

Request for Council Action

Originator Community Development	Item Neighborhoods and Housing
Agenda Section ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS	Date 5/18/2015
Description	

The City Council provided direction during an April 27, 2015 Study Item on Housing and Neighborhoods. Based on Council responses, Environmental Health and HRA recommend five actions:

1. Change City Code to Improve Tall Grass/Weed Enforcement. Modify the City code requirement for weeds and long grass to specify a shorter, 6-inch height when written orders to mow are issued and a shorter, 7-day period to mow before the City uses its mowing contractor. The current City code requirement is one foot tall (or going to seed) and a ten-day compliance period. This proposed change is incorporated in the Miscellaneous Issues Ordinance in Item 8 on this agenda for Ordinances: Public Hearings. If approved, EH will begin enforcing according to the new standards after the ordinance is effective upon its May 28 publication.
2. Focus Area. Develop a pilot program focusing a range of City services on a neighborhood of several adjacent city blocks. In late 2015, staff will propose the elements of a program and a data-based method of selecting the pilot neighborhood. The 2015 budget discussion will also consider funding for a neighborhood emphasis program. If the pilot is successful, the City Council can apply the program to new priority areas.
3. Expand Improvement Loan Criteria. Modify the HRA's home improvement loan program by:
 - Increasing the maximum gross household income thresholds;
 - Increasing the maximum loan amount above \$35,000;
 - Decreasing borrower's equity requirement;
 - Lowering interest rate; and
 - Expanding the scope of eligible improvements (e.g. add driveways, landscaping, garages, kitchens, bathrooms and finishing basements as eligible improvements).

These program modifications will require HRA Board approval. Estimated date for implementation is for applications received after August 2015.

4. Add a Micro Rehab Loan Program. A new deferred loan program for small exterior improvement projects. Eligible improvements will include curbside appeal items like house and garage doors, driveways, landscaping, tree trimming/removal, stump grinding and façade enhancements. This program would help residents complete projects conventional loans typically do not cover. Available in 2016 contingent on funding.
5. Model Home. HRA would purchase a 1950s/1960s "fixer-upper" rambler and document projects through HGTV style videos as examples of ways to modernize and improve a home (e.g. replace kitchen counters and/or cabinets, flooring, finish basements, update landscaping). HRA will sell the remodeled home at the end of the project and feature the project at the 2016 Home Improvement Fair.

Requested Action

Council concurrence that these are the initiatives a majority of the Council desires to implement.

Attachments:

Neighborhoods and Housing Presentation

National Citizen Survey Results Tables from 2012, 2013 & 2014 used in the Presentation